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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6155
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3840
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3699
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4399
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4324

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000111

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: CAT IMPLICATED IN PRESIDENTIAL
SECURITY INCIDENT

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: There have been reports about a recent incident in which a motorist crossed an intersection in front President Berdimuhamedov's motorcade as it moved through Ashgabat. Several high ranking police officials were fired after the incident, and the driver of the vehicle was reportedly beaten and charged with attempted assassination. In another incident, a military official was fired after a cat ran in front of the president's car as he was traveling to his dacha. Rumors are also circulating that there was an assassination attempt against Berdimuhamedov last summer, which was immediately followed by heightened security measures. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) A police captain from the Diplomatic Security Department of the Ministry of Interior, often assigned to duty at the Embassy compound, told Embassy political assistant about the incident in December involving the president's motorcade. A motorist allegedly drove through a blocked-off intersection in front of the President's cortege in Ashgabat. It is not known how the car managed to bypass the police and Ministry of National Security (MNB) officers that cordon off the streets where the president's motorcade is going to pass. One ex-traffic police officer believes that the driver either ignored the officer blocking the street and simply by-passed him, or knew the officer personally and tried, unsuccessfully, to get through before the motorcade arrived.

¶3. (C) According to yet another source, the driver was a resident of Mary, driving a relative's car with Ashgabat license plates. It is possible the provincial driver was unfamiliar with local regulations. The driver was alone in the car. He was quickly stopped by presidential security and bodyguards before he even got close to the president's vehicle. The driver was reportedly "beaten black and blue" before being transported to an MNB detention facility. According to some, he was charged with attempted assassination and sentenced to 25 years in

prison. The acting head of Ashgabat's traffic police department and his two deputies were fired the next day. (NOTE: The fired acting head of the Asghabat police force, Major Babamyrat, is a neighbor of an Embassy employee and confirmed having lost his job in December. END NOTE) The traffic police officer responsible for blocking the street in question was also jailed.

14. (C) Another incident reportedly occurred two months ago that was feared to be an assassination attempt. It was committed by a cat that ran in front of the President's car as he was traveling to his residence in the village of Archibil. (NOTE: Archibil, 20 kilometers from Ashgabat, is located in the foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains and is surrounded by forest. END NOTE) A military lieutenant reported that an officer from the Presidential Security Regiment, responsible for safeguarding that particular area, was fired the following day.

15. (C) COMMENT: Presidential security measures appear to have been heightened in recent weeks. Even streets and parking lots located several blocks from the motorcade's route are blocked off, and any vehicles or pedestrians in the vicinity deemed suspicious are stopped and questioned. There are also rumors circulating that an assassination attempt against the president took place during a visit last August to Balkan Province. Whether or not there is any truth to the rumor, we have noted that since

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last summer, the President's security detail has become more professional and has increased the security cordon around President at events.
END COMMENT.
CURRAN